

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting

June 10, 2013

7:00 p.m.

Lincoln Center

PRESENT: Atwater, Crockett, Cruz, Hagenow, Leon, Pattacini,
Scappaticci, Walton

ALSO PRESENT: Interim Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kisiel, Assistant to the
Superintendent for Finance & Management Brooks,
Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services
Matfess

ABSENT: Luxenberg

A. OPENING

A.1&2. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairperson Pattacini. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Chairperson Pattacini.

A.3 ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

**ADOPTED – Minutes Special Meeting of the Board of
Education of March 28, 2013.**

**Secretary Leon moved and Mr. Atwater seconded the
motion.**

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Pattacini pointed out some minor revisions required in the minutes.
The changes were made.

**6/0/2 – Voted in favor of the amended minutes. (Hagenow
and Crockett abstained)**

ADOPTED – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of March 29, 2013.

Secretary Leon moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the motion.

6/0/2 – Voted in favor. (Hagenow and Crockett abstained)

B. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT – PART I

B.1. 2013-2014 Budget Book Artwork Awards

Mrs. Brooks noted that each year the elementary school children compete for the privilege of having their artwork grace the cover of the annual budget book. This year the cover winners came from Waddell, with three children working on the cover together. Cameron James Hallenbeck, Ana Maria Pushi, and Semra Ayse Saydam were presented with framed copies of their design, along with a gift card to show the Board’s appreciation.

B.2. Update on S.A.A.M. Program

Ms. Linda Cavanaugh reviewed the summer school program that will take place July 1 through August 9 in the district with a current enrollment of 705. Three locations will be used, with Martin hosting Kindergarten for a half day program 8:30-11:30 Monday through Thursdays; Highland Park housing Grades 1-2 8:45 – 3:45 Monday through Friday; and Bennet housing Grades 3-5 8:30 – 3:30 Monday through Friday. Ms. Cavanaugh reviewed the before and after care options available at Bennet and Highland, along with the enrichment aspect of the program. It was noted that the classes for Grades 1-5 will have two teachers in each room with 18-20 students; at Martin the ratio is one teacher to 10 or 11 students per class.

Ms. Cavanaugh stated the site supervisors will be: Brienne Whidden for Martin; Ann Johnston at Highland; and Darcy Fiano for Bennet. Ms. Grace DeAngelis will float between the Highland and Bennet.

Ms. Cavanaugh reviewed that at Bennet and Highland Park morning will be academics with afternoons filled with enrichment activities including sports, music, art, dance, drama, board games, technology, book club, and publishing. Students will be assigned to three topics in the clusters per their interest inventories. Friday afternoons will be both on-site and off-site field trips, including swimming, Lutz museum, bowling, movies, and Oak Grove Nature Center.

The budget for the program is approximately \$900,000. Teacher in-service will be June 27 from 8:00-12:00 at Martin and 8:30-3:30 at Highland Park for

grades 1-5 teachers. CAST will run a six week drama session with a play at the end of the program. The Mary Cheney Library will also visit the sites.

Mr. Leon noted that breakfast and lunch are provided free of charge at Bennet and Highland, and wondered if the Kindergarteners would have time for a snack at Martin. Ms. Cavanaugh stated they would and that a letter would be sent home to parents with added school information, including snack information.

Mr. Leon also wondered why the 50/50 split in internal and external teachers this year and not more internal teachers. Ms. Cavanaugh noted that this year summer school is a bigger commitment. In the past it was a four week program that was held four mornings a week, whereas this year it is a six week program for five full days a week.

Ms. Walton thanked Ms. Cavanaugh for the information presented and wondered if next year we would be able to follow the progress of the Kindergarten students that participate into first grade? Dr. Kisiel noted that we will be looking at data with the NWEA assessments that are given now and again in the fall.

Mr. Pattacini stated he is excited to see the program in action and to see the fruits of our labor next year.

C. CONSENT CALENDAR

Dr. Kisiel presented two items on the Consent Calendar for Board approval.

C.1. Personnel Action

Details had already been provided to the Board members with their agenda.

C.2. Transfer of Funds

Details had already been provided to the Board members in their agenda folders.

- Transfer from Martin Elementary School Administrator Computer Supplies/Materials to Martin Elementary School Administrator Repair account in the amount of \$400.

The Chairman called for a motion.

Secretary Leon moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the recommendation to adopt the Consent Calendar as outlined in our agenda as Item C.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

Mr. Crockett asked for the floor. Mr. Crockett stated that he had made some racially insensitive comments previously and sincerely apologized to Mr. Atwater, the Board of Education, and to Ms. Hagenow – who had never said anything but was dragged into the situation. He also apologized to the people of Manchester and especially the African American community for his comments. Mr. Crockett stated it was never his intention to insult or offend anyone. He had met privately with Mr. Atwater to discuss this and he realized his words were harmful and his comments were very, very wrong. He realizes he was wrong and he asks for forgiveness for his mistake. He has learned from this and he hopes the Board can move forward from this and do the job we were elected to do.

Mr. Atwater read a prepared statement: "Over the past two weeks, I've heard from members in the community who have been very concerned that a public figure may have made some inappropriate remarks that might be racial in nature that were directed toward me. I have had the chance to sit down and have a long conversation with Mr. Crockett about the statement he made. Even after Mr. Crockett had apologized personally to me, we spoke extensively about the meaning of comments, and how even comments that might have been made casually or without thought can still be very damaging or hurtful if they involve negative stereotypes about someone's race. These statements are not okay for anyone to make, but of course those of us who are in the service of Manchester's children should strive to demonstrate the highest level of integrity and respect for one another. No person should have to endure or be subject to the demoralizing effects of discriminatory statements regarding their race, creed, sexual orientation, color, or religious belief. Racial intolerance, whether we realize it or not, influences everyone in some manner each and every day. Sometimes the effects of racism are subtle, other times the effects are profoundly significant and often life changing. Let's be honest: Our culture is still deeply suffused with racism and bias. Racism remains a living and highly adaptive thing in our times and is still distorting American life. We will make little or no progress against this underlying illness by becoming complacent and ignoring the deep-rooted character of racism and bias in our culture and in so many everyday practices and habits. For me, I consider this is a "quiet bias" and it must be eliminated if we are to achieve racial justice and equality in Manchester; if we are to achieve racial justice and equality in America. I am ready and remain ready to challenge racism no matter how discreetly or politely it presents itself and I believe I represent the voice of the African American community, as well as the overall voice of the concerned citizens of Manchester, who not only desire, but should demand equal educational opportunity for all children of Manchester regardless of their ethnicity, social, or economic status.

But, what I feel is important for us to demonstrate to the community here is that people can set things right, heal, and move on, with all of us having a little more respect for each other than we might have before if we just try to sit down and

come together. I cannot associate or identify myself with the same attitudes of intolerance and blatant inability to forgive and let go that I so strongly oppose. Forgiveness and unconditional love are key elements to eliminating biases due to the racial intolerances of people deemed different, deemed unacceptable and inadequate. Therefore, I do accept Mr. Crockett's apology and I appreciate too, that Mr. Crockett was an advocate for me as I was appointed to this Board. After all, I am pretty sure that the public is far more interested in seeing us do our jobs than to be caught up in an ever nastier, ever escalating game of politics that seems to be as eager to tear people down. This has been very unfortunate and had very unfortunate consequences and most importantly, it's time that this Board gets back to working on ways to make Manchester education better, being more decisive on issues like uniforms, improving reading skills, and advocating for a responsible long term plan for upgrading our facilities that taxpayers can get behind. We are the stewards of over \$100 million of taxpayer money, which citizens expect to be used wisely and effectively, as education is the most important service we offer. Therefore, if I may, I give my fellow Board members permission please to put this behind us, and redirect their energy to those worthy endeavors. A famous leader once stated, "We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence of the good people." It is time for us, the Manchester Board of Education, to re-focus, stand up for what is right, and move in the direction of nobility, reliability, and accountability."

D. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

E. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART II

E.1. Teacher Evaluation Program

Dr. Kisiel stated the Teacher Evaluation and Administrator Evaluation handbooks are now complete and have been submitted to the State Department of Education for their review. Recently we received comments from the Department of Education asking us to edit a few minor items to conform with the guidelines, which was done. Tonight, Dr. Kisiel is requesting that the Board accept both the Teacher Evaluation Program, along with the Administrator Evaluation Program, as policy of the Board of Education. The policies are both extensive, approximately 80 pages each, and are available for review on the website. They promote growth for both teachers and administrators.

Secretary Leon moved for the Board of Education to adopt the Teacher Evaluation as a policy of the Board of Education, the revised teacher evaluation program effective July 1, 2013 as reviewed by the State Department

of Education and recommended by the Superintendent of Schools. Mr. Crockett seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Pattacini reviewed that under our bylaws, adopting policy requires two public airings and a 2/3 vote by the Board to ratify. These policies were presented at a prior meeting, so this is the second public airing.

8/0 – Voted in favor.

E.2. Administrator Evaluation Program

Secretary Leon moved for the Administrator Evaluation to be approved as policy for the Board of Education, the revised administrator evaluation program effective July 1, 2013 as reviewed by the State Department of Education and recommended by the Superintendent of Schools. Mr. Crockett seconded the motion.

8/0 – Voted in favor.

Mr. Pattacini thanked the administration for their significant efforts to help improve student achievement and help our district grow with these two policies.

E.3. MHS Elevator Project

Dr. Kisiel was asked to provide an update on what happened with the elevator project at MHS, which was included in the projects approved by the town in the \$4.9 million referendum last fall. The project was included because records could not be located, either at the town or school level, indicating the work had been completed in the past. The town engaged the services of David Stein Architects, who is in contract with the Town of Manchester, who then hired Sterling Elevator Consultants. The consultant's investigation on May 16th showed evidence that the repair is not needed as the work appears to have been performed in the past. After a thorough search, town records show the work was done in 1983. There was lack of information on both the Town and Board of Education sides regarding this and in the future we will be sure to investigate fully before a proposal is made.

Ms. Walton wondered why these records were kept with the town and not the Board of Education. Dr. Kisiel could not answer that, as nobody currently at Central Office was employed back in the early 80s. The records could not be found at the Board of Education.

Ms. Walton stated the \$150,000 earmarked for this repair is just a drop in the bucket of the big picture of critical repairs needed in our schools, and these things will happen. We can't hire a consultant for each item or nothing will get done. Estimates change, and overall the two boards need to work together with patience before finger-pointing and undercutting the work of both boards.

Dr. Kisiel stated that is a good point and was a lesson learned on both sides. We have committed to talk through issues in the future and not point fingers. He is confident that the town and school sides both understand the importance of working together.

Mr. Pattacini was encouraged by the desire of the Boards to work together more closely. Things like this will still occur, but it will be less likely when working together. He wonders if the town and Board of Education staff have been working together sufficiently on the other items that remain. Dr. Kisiel stated it is our intension and our commitment to do so.

Mr. Pattacini noted that it is important for the administration, Building Committee, and town working for a referendum to be on the same page to the greatest extent possible. Dr. Kisiel stated that is our commitment.

F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

G. NEW BUSINESS

G.1. Cheney/Bennet 5th/6th Grade Academy

Dr. Kisiel is requesting two actions tonight with regard to this project. The first is the approval of the educational specifications and noted that the project is labeled the "Bennet Middle School Project". The project being considered for Cheney will be seen as an extension of the original Bennet Middle School Project, as that project has not yet been closed out. This is being done at the request of the State Department of Education and continuing with the same name will help the Department of Education view this as an addition to the original plan.

The Ed Specs were developed in cooperation with the principal at Bennet, the architects from Tai Soo Kim, and Dr. Kisiel, along with other school employees. These represent the framework upon which the architects will develop their schematic designs to be presented to the Department of Education for approval through the grant process.

Dr. Kisiel pointed out one correction needed on Page 205. The reference to road names in the site plan regarding ingress and egress needs to be deleted (ie. Ferguson and Porter).

Mr. Pattacini asked what the nature of the action required is. Dr. Kisiel reviewed approval is the first step needed to proceed to referendum. The Ed Specs and grant application will proceed to the architect for schematic design and then on to approval of the State Department of Education. Dr. Kisiel further noted that failure to act on this item puts the project in jeopardy by delaying it one year. The items are due to the state by June 30th in order to put the project in the funding pipeline.

Randall Luther, the architect from Tai Soo Kim, presented a power point with some floor plans and renderings that were not previously seen by the Board. Mr. Luther also reviewed that previously the estimate for the work was at \$18.8 million. With the completion of the feasibility study, the estimate has now dropped to \$17.4 million. That means a net cost to the town of approximately \$7.2 million based on the current and proposed square feet and estimated reimbursement rate. In his conversations with the state, they suggested we propose special legislation regarding the lower level of the rec building, which is where the old pool and bowling alley are, to remove that square footage from the school and reassign it as Board of Education space. If this is approved, that will drop the costs down further.

Ms. Walton inquired about the iron gates, which were not visible in the drawings. Mr. Luther assured her they are still part of the plan and simply were not present in the drawings to highlight other items. He also pointed out the plan is to change the paving between the gates as well, to incorporate the courtyard feel.

Ms. Walton asked about the front entrance to the Cheney building, wondering if people enter into a hallway. Mr. Luther pointed out the entrance is directly to the main office. Mr. Luther also pointed out the Special Education space that can be used as an additional 5th grade classroom during the spike year in 2017.

Mr. Leon wondered if the smoke stack will be kept. Mr. Luther stated the local historic district was open to its removal, but the state felt it was an important aspect. He noted they did plan contingency funds if it becomes necessary to keep it. It becomes a maintenance problem but can be worked around.

Mr. Leon pointed out that we still haven't come to the point that we need a redistricting plan if this project is to move forward. Dr. Kisiel stated he has hired a demographic firm, and Mr. Zuba has begun the preliminary plan. Mr.

Zuba estimates he can have a preliminary plan in 45 days, and a summer report is expected. The Town indicated they will offer some support to complete that work.

Mr. Scappaticci appreciated that Mr. Luther's designs were sympathetic to the surrounding architecture and wishes the firm that designed the Cone building had been as sympathetic. Mr. Luther agreed that building is ugly.

Mr. Scappaticci wondered if some of the smoke stack could be removed. Mr. Luther was unsure, but noted he has made it clear that the project will die if a compromise cannot be reached, and the result will be that the buildings in question continue to remain abandoned and deteriorating.

Mr. Scappaticci suggested taking the historic commission on a tour of the Cheney building, which he volunteered to lead, and pointed out there is no educational value in a chimney.

Dr. Kisiel pointed out to Mr. Luther that we will be using the name "Bennet Middle School" to reflect the project, instead of the Cheney/Bennet Academy.

Mr. Luther noted he understood that this will be a modification to the Bennet project, as that project is still open. He also reviewed that until the project is officially in the pipeline, it is difficult to get the state to respond to questions.

Mr. Pattacini wondered if the SMARTR Committee had seen and approved this update. Mr. Luther noted he had just come from the Building Committee meeting, to which SMARTR was invited. There have been no significant changes since the last time he presented to SMARTR.

Mr. Pattacini wondered if the building committee had any feedback. Mr. Luther noted they had some questions on the bridge design and making the roof on the addition "green". There were comments made regarding the sun shades on the cafeteria, wondering if something similar could be put on the Cheney building. Mr. Luther noted that would impact the profile, but there are products that can be applied inside the windows to cut down on the impact of the afternoon sun. Those contingencies have been budgeted for and those conversations will continue as the project moves ahead.

Secretary Leon moved that the Board of Education approve the educational specifications, with corrections on Page 205 as outlined by Dr. Kisiel, for Bennet Middle School for the purposes of accommodating the enrollment of grade five students. Mr. Crockett seconded the motion.

8/0 – Voted in favor.

Secretary Leon moved that the Board of Education recommend to the Board of Directors for the formation of a building committee, preparation of schematic drawings, and outline of specifications with corrections to page 205 as outlined by Dr. Kisiel, and the filing of an 049R grant application for the Bennet Middle School State project #077-0209. Mr. Crockett seconded the motion.

8/0 – Voted in favor.

H. COMMUNICATIONS

H.1. Memorial Day Flowers

Dr. Kisiel read a letter from Betsy Baker regarding the flowers donated by the elementary school children for the Memorial Day Parade. She thanked everyone for their support. Dr. Kisiel noted all nine elementary schools had families donate flowers.

H.2. Superintendent Search

Mr. Pattacini reviewed that the search for a new Superintendent continues. He noted they are taking the necessary time to hire the right person.

I. COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

J. PUBLIC COMMENTS (Limited to items on tonight's agenda)

None.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Ms. Walton had recently come across a State Board of Education report that outlined the number of in-school and out-of-school suspensions for pre-K through Grade 2 across the state. Ms. Walton wondered if we could look at the number of suspensions for grades K-2 in our district. She is interested in what behaviors qualify for suspension in those grades and the immediate and long-term impacts of this practice.

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Pattacini called for a motion to adjourn.

Secretary Leon moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 8:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Neal Leon
Board Secretary